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SUBJECT: BAHRAIN HAILS HAMAS-FATAH DEAL

Classified By: DCM Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) Bahrainis universally acclaimed the Saudi-sponsored agreement between Hamas and Fatah to form a national unity government. King Hamad phoned Saudi King Abdullah February 9 and congratulated him on the fruitful outcome of the Mecca talks. He said the accord aimed to stop the bloodshed, end the suffering of Palestinians, and unify their efforts to "win back their legitimate rights."

12. (SBU) The Cabinet February 11 issued a statement hailing the agreement and praising King Abdullah. The Cabinet described the agreement as a decisive step toward Palestinian unity, maintenance of national authority, protection of the rights of Palestinians, and establishment of an independent state. In a February 9 statement, Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa welcomed the agreement and called on the international community to support the deal, cooperate with the Palestinian government, and "lift the siege" imposed on Palestinians. The Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Al Minbar political society and leading Shia political society Al Wifaq also issued supportive statements. Al Wifaq said the agreement reinforced unity among Palestinians and contributed to "stopping the bloodshed between twin brothers."

13. (C) Comment: As the Hamas-Fatah deal was brokered by the Saudi king, it is no surprise that Bahrain was quick to voice its support. That said, the GOB and Bahraini society at large have long expressed deep concern about the Palestinian conflict and the impact it has on the region's relations with the U.S. The government, which made a high profile diplomatic foray when FM Shaikh Khalid met with Abu Mazen in Ramallah in late 2006, is no doubt encouraged that the agreement offers prospects for a more stable government and the potential resumption of at least some official aid.

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